



**INTEGRATING READERSHIP PROMOTION AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS FOR
SUSTAINABLE READING CULTURE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: INSIGHTS FROM THE
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, BABURA**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the integration of readership promotion strategies and student engagement programs on reading habits in a newly established university in Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, targeting undergraduate students, with disproportionate stratified random sampling used to select respondents from the School of Engineering and the School of Science, Information and Communication Technology. Out of 500 distributed questionnaires, 442 were returned. The research instrument, adapted from existing literature, was validated by subject matter experts and demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$). Ordinal linear regression was used to analyze the data due to the ordinal nature of the responses. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.—The findings revealed that both student engagement programs and readership promotion strategies significantly enhanced the reading culture among students. Student engagement programs such as advisory committees, reading challenges, and library events accounted for 85.8% of the variation in students' reading habits ($R = .926$, $R^2 = .858$, $p = .002$), while readership promotion strategies including library orientations, book clubs, and social media campaigns explained 26.6% of the variation ($R = .516$, $R^2 = .266$, $p = .001$). consequently, based on these results, it is recommended that the university formally integrate student engagement initiatives such as peer-led reading circles, book discussions, and reading competitions into its academic calendar and co-curricular framework, with consistent support through funding, staff coordination, and student leadership development to ensure sustainability and strengthen a lasting reading culture and among others.

Keywords: Readership Promotion Strategies, Student Engagement Programs, Reading Habits,

Introduction

A nation's progress is deeply tied to the intellectual development of its citizens, and this can only be achieved when deliberate efforts are made to improve and sustain a vibrant reading culture. Societies that prioritize reading cultivate individuals with enhanced critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Jiang, Chi, Zuo, Chu & Zhug, 2021). The term reading habit refers to the routine practice of reading, while a reading culture encompasses a broader, more ingrained societal value system that encourages and supports critical reading and writing (Kim, Lee & Zuilkowski, 2020). For a society to achieve this level of engagement, individuals must first develop basic literacy skills, evolve into regular readers, and eventually gain the ability to engage with texts at a deeper, analytical level.

This transformation ideally begins in early childhood when individuals are introduced to books and other reading materials. A strong foundation in reading not only improves educational outcomes but also fosters emotional intelligence and cultural awareness. Korat (2010) suggests that societies where reading is nurtured from a young age tend to experience greater levels of civic participation, innovation, and social cohesion. Consequently, nations that fail to instill a reading culture in their citizens may face long-term developmental setbacks.

University libraries play an essential role in cultivating and supporting reading culture in academic settings. By offering access to diverse reading materials and structured environments conducive for learning, libraries serve as agents of literacy and lifelong learning. However, the contribution of libraries in this regard, must go beyond book lending and services. Rather, university libraries must be proactive in engaging students through various literacy-based initiatives and readership promotion campaigns. Readership promotion initiatives like book fairs, reading challenges, author talks, and literary clubs must be designed to stimulate interest in reading and build a community around books. Such programs, when effectively marketed through institutional platforms and social media, significantly boost student participation. In addition, activities like peer-led book discussions, academic mentorship programs, and student-led literacy events that could provide university students with a sense of ownership and personal connection to reading should be strategically designed by university libraries. These campaigns no doubt serve as both engagement tools and foundational efforts in shaping the academic identity of a newly established university. They not only introduce students to reading but also embed it into their daily academic and social routines, making reading a valued and enjoyable part of university life (Cai & Zhao, 2022).

Therefore, conducting a study on the integrating readership promotion strategies and students' engagement programs on reading habits in FUTB, a newly established federal University of technology would no doubt address the growing concern over low reading culture among

students in higher education. With the university still in its formative years, there is an opportunity to assess how structured initiatives such as readership promotion campaigns and student-centered programs shape students' attitudes and behaviors toward reading.

Statement of the Problem

The role of readership promotion strategies and student engagement programs in influencing reading habits in tertiary institutions, particularly universities, cannot be overemphasized. Scholars such as Jiang et al. (2021) and Klimova and Zamborova (2020) emphasize that effective implementation of these strategies is essential for cultivating a strong reading culture among students, thereby enhancing the impact and relevance of university libraries. Despite substantial investments by the management of the FUT Babura, in providing both print and digital information resources, there remains a noticeable lack of student engagement with these materials, either through physical library visits or online access to electronic databases/sources. This situation raises concerns about the effectiveness of existing efforts and prompts the need to explore how strategic readership promotion and student engagement programs can be harnessed to nurture and influence students' reading habits. Therefore, this study aims to examine the extent to which these initiatives can enhance the reading culture within the university.

Research Hypotheses

Two research hypotheses are formulated to guide the study:

H0₁: Student engagement programs do not significantly influence or enhance reading culture in the newly established university, FUTB.

H0₂: Readership promotion campaign strategy does not significantly influence or enhance reading culture in the newly established university

Literature Review

University libraries serve as pivotal tools in cultivating and sustaining a robust reading culture within higher education institutions. They provide access to a diverse range of reading materials, including print books, digital resources, and multimedia content, which cater to varied academic interests and learning preferences. Universities that actively invest in library-based programs such as reading incentives, book exhibitions, and interactive literary events observe significant increases in voluntary student reading (Ojedokun and Idiegbeyan-Ose 2023).

Student engagement programs are structured initiatives designed to actively involve students in both academic and extracurricular activities that support their intellectual, emotional, and social development. In university environment, these programs are crucial for connecting students with learning processes in more meaningful ways. When applied to reading culture, engagement programs aim to transform reading from a solitary academic task into an interactive, enjoyable,

and socially relevant experience. In a newly established institution like the FUTB these programs can play a central role in shaping a foundational academic culture and instilling lifelong reading habits among students. A strong reading culture is essential for fostering critical thinking, improving academic performance, and supporting lifelong learning. However, recent studies have identified a noticeable decline in voluntary reading among university students, attributed to digital distractions and low motivation (Ogunbode & George, 2023). To counter this trend, student engagement strategies must be employed to make reading more appealing.

Peer-led book clubs and reading circles have proven effective in this regard, as they allow students to lead discussions and exchange perspectives, thereby developing comprehension and analytical skills (Brown & Peterson, 2022). For example, Midland College's Veterans Book Club has successfully used weekly discussions to foster a sustained reading culture among its participants (Midland College, 2025). Digital and augmented reality platforms also offer new avenues for engagement. Initiatives like the Augmented Library, which uses head-mounted display technology, create immersive and interactive reading experiences that appeal to digitally inclined students (Wei et al., 2024).

Co-curricular and co-creation initiatives further enhance student engagement by involving learners in selecting reading materials and facilitating discussions. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and increases motivation to read (Vogue, 2024). Institutional and library-based programs such as reading contests, author workshops, and literary exhibitions have also shown strong influence in promoting voluntary reading. Research by Ojedokun and Idiegbeyan-Ose (2023) indicates that such programs significantly increase students' interaction with literary resources. Similarly, findings from *Australia Reads* (2023) demonstrate that live literature events stimulate student interest, leading to increased borrowing and class discussions. Author visits have been particularly impactful; they give students the chance to interact directly with writers and explore literature as both a personal and professional tool. According to *AASL Knowledge Quest* (2021), students often express renewed motivation and enthusiasm for reading following these events. These diverse student engagement strategies effectively support the development of a vibrant reading culture, providing strong evidence against hypothesis which claims that student engagement programs do not significantly influence or enhance reading culture.

In addition, a readership Promotion Campaign Strategy is a critical instrument for cultivating a robust reading culture in universities. These campaigns integrate various initiatives such as digital literacy training, peer reading programs, multisensory reading promotions, and book clubs to enhance students' engagement with texts. Sapra (2024) emphasize that these strategies not only support academic excellence but also nurture lifelong learning habits by promoting both academic and recreational reading. Aligning reading initiatives with technological advancements such as e-books, online platforms, and digital storytelling institutions can effectively respond to

the changing dynamics of student interaction with literature. Moreover, fostering inclusive reading programs that collaborate with faculty and adapt to student needs contributes to developing research skills, critical thinking, and a sense of intellectual community within the academic environment.

Studies have shown that peer reading programs enhance comprehension and critical thinking by fostering student collaboration (Jiang et al., 2021; Stigmar, 2016), while multisensory reading campaigns have led to measurable increases in student participation and borrowing rates (Yu et al., 2023). Additionally, critical reading strategies have been linked to improved analytical and cognitive abilities essential for academic and professional success (Yang & Mei, 2023; Clark & Picton, 2023). Institutions like the University of Cape Town and Harvard University exemplify this model by embedding reading promotion efforts into academic frameworks and digital infrastructure (Sapra, 2024). The unique focusing influence of the Readership Promotion Campaign Strategy lies in its ability to strategically integrate digital resources, collaborative learning, and inclusive engagement to establish reading as a central pillar of academic culture. This ensures that reading becomes not only a tool for learning but a sustained cultural practice within higher education.

The Research Environment

The Federal University of Technology, Babura (FUTB), Jigawa state was established by the Federal Government in 2nd June, 2021. However, it was until February, 2022 when the four Principal Officers of the University were appointed. Hence, the POs earnestly started working for the speedy take off of the university. With the support of the other principal officers, the university librarian and the Library staff directed their energy towards the establishment of the university library. The library received its first set of book consignment on 24th June, 2023. The books were moved to the library and processed between the 1st June, 2023 and across the months. The university library started its operation on 19th June, 2023 at the temporary site of the university. The location of the university library is a very perfect one because of its proximity to the academic wing of the campus. The student hostel is also located close to the library. This give the student the opportunity of easy access and to patronise the library after hours of rest. The library also provide lending services to the university community especially the academic staff and students. Available records indicates that, so far eighteen (18) academic staff barrowed 18 no of books while 28 students borrowed 28 book titles from the August 22, to October 24, 2023 which signalled a sign of starting well for a new library.

Research Design

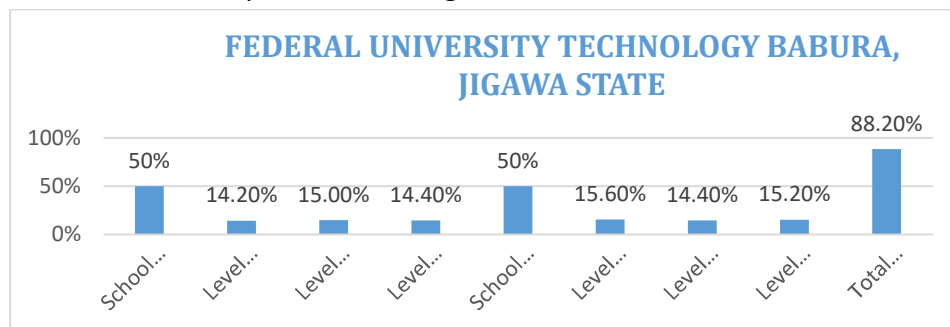
The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, targeting all undergraduate students at the FUTB. A disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was employed to select

participants from the two schools of the university; the School of Engineering and Technology and the School of Science, Information and Communication Technology. A total of 500 set of questionnaires were distributed, with 250 respondents randomly selected from various departments within the two schools. The research instrument was subjected to a content validation process with subject experts, including academic professionals, a statistician, and a language specialist. Its reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89, indicating a high level of internal consistency. The data collected was used to test the two influential hypotheses formulated to guide the study. As such, Ordinal linear regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses due to the nature of the data which ordinal data.

Data Analysis

Response Rate

In testing the two hypotheses guiding this study, Figure 1 shows a strong response from students at the Federal University of Technology Babura, Jigawa State, specifically from the School of Engineering and the School of Science, Information and Communication Technology. Out of 500 questionnaires distributed per school, a total 442 copies of questionnaire were returned, yielding an overall response rate of 88.8%. The School of Engineering returned 218 questionnaires (43.6%), while the School of Science, Information and Communication Technology returned 224 (45.2%). Response rates across all academic levels (100, 200, and 300) were consistently high, ranging from 14.2% to 15.6% per level. See figure 1 below.



(Field survey, 2025)

H₀₁: Student engagement programs do not significantly influence or enhance reading culture in the newly established university.

Table 1: Ordinal linear regression analysis on student engagement programs do not significantly influence or enhance reading culture in the newly established university.

	N	Mean	S.D.	R	R ²	Durbin	P-value	Decision
Student engagement programs	442	2.9296	1.40351	.926 ^a	.858	.597	.002 ^b	H ₀₁ : Rejected
Reading culture	442	2.7286	1.25641					

(Field survey, 2025)

The ordinal linear regression analysis indicates that student engagement programs significantly influence and enhance the reading culture in the newly established university. The model demonstrates a strong positive relationship, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.926 and an R-squared (R²) value of 0.858. This suggests that approximately 85.8% of the variation in students' reading culture can be explained by their participation in these programs. The p-value of 0.002 confirms the statistical significance of this relationship, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H₀₅) that student engagement programs do not significantly influence reading culture. Therefore, the data supports the conclusion that active involvement in student engagement initiatives, such as advisory committees, reading challenges, and library events, plays a crucial role in fostering a robust reading culture among students.

H₀₂: Readership promotion campaign strategy does not significantly influence or enhance reading culture in the newly established university.

Table 2: Ordinal linear regression analysis on readership promotion campaign strategy does not significantly influence or enhance reading culture in the newly established university.

	N	Mean	S.D.	R	R ²	Durbin	P-value	Remark
Readership promotion strategy	442	2.8040	.43958	.516 ^a	.266	1.003	.001 ^b	H ₀₂ : Rejected
Reading culture	442	2.7286	1.25641					

(Field survey, 2025)

The ordinal linear regression analysis shows that the readership promotion campaign strategy has a statistically significant influence on enhancing reading culture in the newly established university (p = .001). The correlation coefficient (R = .516) indicates a moderate positive relationship, and the R² value of .266 suggests that approximately 26.6% of the variance in reading culture can be explained by the readership promotion campaign strategy. This means that efforts such as library orientations, book clubs, and social media campaigns play a

meaningful role in improving students' reading habits. Therefore, the null hypothesis that readership promotion campaign strategy does not significantly influence reading culture is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

1. The results show that student engagement programs significantly influence and enhance the reading culture in the newly established university. With a strong correlation coefficient ($R = .926$) and a high explained variance ($R^2 = .858$), these programs account for about 85.8% of the variation in reading culture. The p-value (.002) confirms the significance of this relationship, indicating that initiatives like advisory committees, reading challenges, and library events play a crucial role in promoting reading habits among students. This aligns with Yaqoob (2023), who argues that student engagement efforts must be aligned with students' media habits and interests to achieve significant impact. Similarly, Teen Vogue (2024) highlights that students are more responsive to reading initiatives that are experiential, culturally relevant, and embedded in social interaction rather than simply academic obligations. Mean perception scores ranging from 2.31 to 3.01 reflect moderate student agreement on the effectiveness of these programs in promoting enjoyment, academic relevance, and reading habits.
2. The result indicate that readership promotion campaign strategies significantly enhance the reading culture at the newly established university. These strategies explain about 26.6% of the variation in reading culture, showing a moderate positive impact. This suggests that activities like library orientations, book clubs, and social media campaigns effectively encourage students to read more. The strategies in the finding demonstrate a clear inclination toward top-down, digitally mediated outreach, which aligns with Gao (2021), who argues that internet-based reading promotion activities can play a significant role in shaping student behavior and personality development. However, the limited participation in more student-centric strategies such as book clubs (12.8%), digital resource workshops (11.3%), and student-led book reviews (8.8%) reflects a gap in direct student engagement. This imbalance indicate that while institutions may be successful in delivering content and initial guidance as reflected in the relatively high effectiveness rating of library orientation (mean = 3.45) there is a lack of continuity in efforts to build intrinsic motivation for reading.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that both student engagement programs and readership promotion strategies have a significant and positive impact on the development of reading culture among students at the newly established Federal University of Technology,

Babura, Jigawa State. The ordinal linear regression analysis revealed that student engagement programs, such as reading challenges, advisory committees, and library events, strongly influence students' reading habits, accounting for 85.8% of the variation in reading culture ($R = 0.926$, $R^2 = 0.858$, $p = 0.002$). Similarly, the readership promotion campaign strategy, including initiatives like library orientations, book clubs, and social media outreach, also demonstrated a statistically significant impact, explaining 26.6% of the variance ($R = 0.516$, $R^2 = 0.266$, $p = 0.001$). As both null hypotheses (H_{01} and H_{02}) are rejected, the evidence clearly supports that these institutional efforts are instrumental in fostering a sustained and vibrant reading culture in the university.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. The university should formally integrate student engagement initiatives such as peer-led reading circles, book discussions, and reading competitions into the academic calendar and co-curricular structure. These programs have demonstrated a strong influence on students' reading habits and should be consistently supported through funding, staff coordination, and student leadership development to sustain participation and long-term impact.
2. The university library should enhance its promotion strategies by incorporating more digital tools, including social media campaigns, mobile reading apps, and virtual book exhibitions. These efforts should target diverse student interests and reading levels, ensuring inclusivity and wider reach. Regular feedback mechanisms should also be established to continuously adapt and improve the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting a reading culture.

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